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NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: THE THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE OF MIDRASHIC EXEGESIS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, evangelical scholars discussed extensively the NT's use of the OT, paying special attention to the fact that the NT sometimes interprets OT passages in ways that depart significantly from the apparent meaning of those passages in their original context.[1] Many OT

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[1] Among the more noteworthy studies are the following: G. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" *Them* 14 (1989) 89–96; D. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the OT in the New," *BSac* 142 (1985) 209–23, 306–19; D. A. Carson and H. Williamson, eds., *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge, eds., *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986); R. T. France, *Jesus and the OT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971); D. Hagner, "The Old Testament in the New Testament," in *Interpreting the Word of God* (ed. S. Schultz and M. Inch; Chicago: Moody Press, 1976) 78–104; S. L. Johnson, Jr., *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980); W. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); idem, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *Evangelical Roots: A Tribute to Wilber Smith* (ed. K. Kantzer; Nashville: Nelson, 1978) 123–41; W. LaSor, "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation* (ed. W. Gasque and W. LaSor; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 260–77; R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); idem, "Who is the Prophet Talking About? Some Reflections on the New Testament Use of the Old," *Them* 13 (1987) 4–8; D. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 175–211; D. Oss, "Canon as Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics," *GTJ* 9 (1988) 105–27; P. Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," *JETS* 20 (1977) 243–53; V. S. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *WTJ* 48 (1986) 241–79; M. Silva, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Text Form and Authority," in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 147–65; B. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (ed. J. Feinberg and P. Feinberg; Chicago: Moody, 1981) 3–18. See also the compilation of important articles (including reprints of some of the above) in G. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). The groundwork for many of the above studies was laid by earlier works such as W. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (New York: Crowell, 1905); R. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954); E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); R. Nicole, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Revelation and the Bible* (ed. C. Henry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958) 135–51.

verses that are cited as eschatological prophecies of Jesus Christ, when read in their original context do not appear to have been speaking of the *eschaton* or the Messiah at all. Such cases provided grist for advocates of a liberal view of biblical authority.[2] The challenge for evangelical scholars, then, was determining whether NT writers presented something other than a grammatical-historical interpretation of the OT and, if so, how such interpretations could square with conservative views of biblical inspiration and inerrancy.

Various proposals were suggested and debated. Perhaps the fault lay in our own reading of Scripture, so we should accept the NT writers' interpretations of the OT even when we do not understand how they derived their interpretations.[3] Maybe the OT passages in question should be seen as generic promises that included the NT's messianic application,[4] or as texts that related to the Messiah on the basis of corporate solidarity,[5] or typology.[6] Perhaps NT writers gave the *sensus plenior* ("fuller sense") of an OT verse which they themselves were now revealing as inspired Christian interpreters,[7] or which a canonical-process reading of the OT had indicated.[8]

[2] E.g. D. Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 81–83; P. Achtemeier, "How the Scriptures Were Formed," in *The Authoritative Word* (ed. D. McKim; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 11–12; C. K. Barrett, "The Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New," in *The Authoritative Word* 46–50; R. Evans and I. Berent, *Fundamentalism: Hazards and Heartbreaks* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1988) 123–31.

[3] See J. B. Payne, "*Apeitheō*: Current Resistance to Biblical Inerrancy," in R. Youngblood, ed., *Evangelicals and Inerrancy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 120–21, 126; "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," *JETS* 21 (1978) 295; J. Smith, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1984; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993) 9, 22–23, 26–27. For an evaluation of this approach, see Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*" 184–85.

[4] Walter Kaiser is the major defender of this view. He commonly contends that a cited OT passage had a "single intent" that the human OT author necessarily understood (*The Uses of the OT in the New* 66–76; idem, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *Evangelical Roots* 123–41; W. Kaiser and M. Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994] 139–58).

[5] Corporate solidarity refers to the idea of an intrinsic connection between the group and the individual, so that what is said of the representative leader applies to the group's members, and vice versa (see Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 170–72; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis* 93–94).

[6] Typology refers to the way in which events, persons, or institutions correspond to, and thus prefigure subsequent events, persons, or institutions. See Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 165–69; D. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the OT," *SJT* 29 (1976) 137–57; reprinted in G. Beale, ed., *Right Doctrine* 313–30. Such works are highly dependent upon L. Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh, 1939; ET Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

[7] Presentations of the concept of *sensus plenior* began with Roman Catholic theologians (see R. Brown, *The 'Sensus Plenior' of Sacred Scripture* [Baltimore: St. Mary's University, 1955]; idem, "The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*," *CBQ* 15 [1953] 141–62; idem, "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," *CBQ* 25 [1963] 262–85). The concept was accommodated by evangelical scholars (e.g. W. LaSor, "*Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation" 260–77; idem, "Interpretation of Prophecy" in *Hermeneutics* [ed. B. Ramm; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971] 94–117; Hagner, "OT in the NT" 90–104). Douglas Moo and Douglas Oss urged caution about the idea of a *sensus plenior* unless it was indicated by a canonical process reading of a passage (see n. 8 below).

[8] A canonical process approach affirms that progressive revelation may elaborate on earlier passages so as to provide the full divine meaning of what earlier writers had prophesied. This full

Each of these proposals made a partial contribution to the resolution of the problem by explaining the NT's use of the OT in certain instances, but none of them alone provided an overall solution. Nor did there appear to be a way to tie all of these proposals together under one all-encompassing rubric that might explain how the NT could so freely use OT passages in ways that differed from their plain-sense meaning while still claiming to be doing actual exegesis.

Despite the lack of consensus after two decades of debate, virtually all evangelical scholars acknowledged that, to some degree at least, the NT's method of exegesis resembled Jewish hermeneutics of late antiquity. Yet this admission was usually made reluctantly.[9] Ancient Jewish exegesis of the OT—a methodology that may be designated broadly as midrashic exegesis[10]—at times offered interpretations far more fanciful than anything found in the NT, and often those interpretations were associated with

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meaning may not have been understood by the earlier writers, but neither is it substantially different from, or in contradiction to their understanding and intended meaning (see Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach" 3–18; Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture" 241–79; Moo, "*Sensus Plenior*" 204–11; Oss, "Canon as Context" 105–27).

[9] E. Earle Ellis (*Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 147–236) and Richard Longenecker (*Biblical Exegesis* 51–220) were exceptional in their emphasis upon the similarities of NT hermeneutics and Jewish hermeneutics.

[10] As my former professor Jacob Neusner points out, the term *midrash* has been used in multitudinous ways, and the result has been great ambiguity and confusion (see J. Neusner, *What Is Midrash?* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987] xi–xii, 1–3; also R. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989] 10–14). I want to make it clear that I do not use the term in this article to speak of a literary genre, or of the practice of creating homiletic stories or expansions of OT narratives, and I certainly am not suggesting that the Gospels themselves may be categorized as midrash. I restrict the use of this term to an exegetical procedure, the methodology of which I explain in detail in the following pages. Yet even in the context of exegesis, many writers use the word "midrash" to designate the particular form of exegesis we observe in rabbinic literature as distinguished from the so-called *pesher* exegesis of the Qumran scrolls. Some writers use the phrase "*midrash-pesher*" to refer to the practice of incorporating exposition into the text of an OT quotation itself. For some writers, "*midrash*" has become a virtual designation for the *gezerah shawah* technique of joining together passages sharing a common word. Such varied uses of terminology can be quite misleading. Many scholars simply use "*midrash(ic)*" as a generic designation of the hermeneutics used by virtually all Jewish groups of late antiquity, and that is how I use the term in this article (see, e.g., Neusner, *What Is Midrash?* 7–12, 46–47; I. H. Marshall, "An Assessment of Recent Developments," in *It Is Written* 13–14; B. Chilton, "Commenting on the OT (with Particular Reference to the Pesharim, Philo, and the Mekhilta)," in *It Is Written* 137–38; G. J. Brooke, "Qumran Pesher: Towards the Redefinition of Genre," *RevQ* 10 [1981] 485–503). In this sense, the term "midrash(ic)" denotes an exegetical methodology characterized by non-grammatical-historical interpretations that often read OT words or phrases in new contexts drawn from other portions of divine revelation. While the generic use of this term indicates the broad commonality of ancient Jewish groups in their hermeneutics, it should not cause one to overlook the permutations that properly differentiate the exegetical techniques of the Qumran scrolls, the rabbinic literature, the NT, etc. Let me also say that I am not wedded to the use of *midrash* as a generic designation of ancient Jewish hermeneutics. The advantage of the term is that it suggests the non-grammatical-historical aspect of the methodology, but if a less confusing term will serve better, I am open to its implementation.

unhistorical embellishments of OT narratives.[11] The additional fact that liberal critics began to suggest that the four Gospels of the NT might themselves be classified as Christian "midrash" (in the sense of unhistorical literary creations) could not help but turn conservative minds away from considering the possibility that midrashic hermeneutics might be the overall explanation for why the NT departed on occasion from the grammatical-historical sense of the OT. Still, the "Jewishness" of the NT's use of the OT was too glaring to dismiss entirely. So while evangelicals were willing to acknowledge a degree of Judaic influence in the NT's use of the OT, most still felt uncomfortable with the questions that arose if NT exegesis were categorized as fundamentally midrashic.

In recent years, a few evangelical scholars have reopened the issue,[12] raising again the familiar questions: Did NT authors employ midrashic techniques that derived meanings going beyond what the human author of an OT passage intended to communicate? If so, did they employ these midrashic techniques not merely as accommodative, *ad hominem* arguments when addressing Jewish opponents, but as inherently valid ways of reading the OT? Is such a hermeneutic legitimate, and does it truly comport with a high view of Scripture? Can we today employ this non-grammatical-historical method of reading the OT, rather than seeing it as something confined to inspired interpreters of the first century?

[11] In rabbinic documents, for example, one finds not only numerous embellishments of OT narratives, but midrashic interpretations based on the individual letters of a Hebrew word, or even on the visual appearance of the written letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Semantic significance is sometimes assigned to minor particles of speech that serve no actual semantic function in Hebrew grammar (D. Aaron, "Language and Midrash," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* [ed. J. Neusner and A. Avery-Peck; Leiden: Brill, 2005] 406–9). These kinds of fanciful manipulations of the text are basically a peculiarity of rabbinic literature, and one does not observe this kind of extremism in the NT's exegesis of the OT. It should be noted, however, that even with Rabbinic exegesis, at least some of its apparent fancifulness is due to our failure as modern readers to appreciate the presuppositions of the rabbis (see D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990] 119).

[12] See S. Swanson, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the NT? Why Are We Still Asking?," *TrinJ* 17 NS (1996) 67–76; J. Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15," *WTJ* 63 (2001) 87–96; idem, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* 44 (2001) 5–23; D. McCartney and P. Enns, "Matthew and Hosea: A Response to John Sailhamer," *WTJ* 63 (2001) 97–105; C. Blomberg, "Interpreting OT Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfillment," *TrinJ* 23 NS (2002) 17–22; P. Enns, "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse," *WTJ* 65 (2003) 263–87; G. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *JETS* 48 (2005) 5–31; I. Provan, "How Can I Understand, Unless Someone Explains It to Me? (Acts 8:30–31): Evangelicals and Biblical Hermeneutics," *BBR* 17 (2007) 1–36. A perusal of the above works reveals that the issue of debate still centers largely upon whether the NT's interpretations of the OT can be seen as solely grammatical-historical. John Sailhamer, Gregory Beale, and Craig Blomberg affirm that the literary context of a cited OT passage must yield, by grammatical-historical analysis, the NT writer's interpretation. Blomberg's concept of "double fulfillment" maintains that both a contemporary and an eschatological fulfillment may be implied within a prophecy's literary context. Dan McCartney and Peter Enns, on the other hand, are ardent proponents of the position that NT exegesis of the OT is not fundamentally grammatical-historical in nature and that we must acknowledge the Jewish hermeneutical milieu within which the NT writers operated.

I believe that the answer to all of these questions is "yes." The simple truth is that when we analyze the intertestamental literature, the Qumran scrolls, the targums, and the rabbinic corpus, we find the same phenomenon of exegesis that we observe in the NT: the tendency to read OT statements in something other than their grammatical-historical sense.[13] In my opinion, the problem with prior studies of the issue is that they have failed to fully appreciate the theological rationale of the midrashic method of exegesis that was assumed by Jews of late antiquity. Far too many scholars explain midrashic hermeneutics as little more than the use of certain exegetical rules (e.g. the seven *middot* of Hillel) or, in particular, the practice of associating OT verses that contain a common word (*gezerah shawah*).[14] These features are certainly found in midrashic exegesis, but reducing the hermeneutic to such matters is overly simplistic and fails to address its fundamental philosophy and purpose. As I will attempt to show, a primary characteristic of midrashic exegesis was the "re-contextualization" of statements found in one portion of Scripture so that parallels with other divine contexts might be highlighted and the fullness of God's eternal plan be made clear. The reason for using this approach was because it was the very methodology that the nature and purpose of God's OT revelation warranted.

It is unfortunate that the major scholarly studies on midrashic exegesis have come, not from evangelicals, but from theological liberals in the field of religious studies or from postmodern literary critics.[15] Scholars from both of

[13] See the discussion of this phenomenon in Enns, "Apostolic Hermeneutics" 266–70.

[14] E.g. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis* 32–38, 97–98; K. Snodgrass, "The Use of the OT in the New," in *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* (ed. D. Black and D. Dockery; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 420–22; D. Bock, "Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (ed. D. Dockery, K. Mathews, and R. Sloan; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994, 1999) 100–101; W. Klein, C. Blomberg, and R. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 125–32; C. Evans, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New," in *Introducing New Testament Interpretation* (ed. S. McKnight; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) 163–93. On the inadequacy of viewing midrashic exegesis as merely the use of rabbinic *middot*, see R. Kern-Ulmer, "Hermeneutics, Techniques of Rabbinic Exegesis," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* (ed. J. Neusner and A. Avery-Peck; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 1:268–92; G. Porton, "Hermeneutics, a Critical Approach," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* 1:250–68; D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 40–42. The *middot* were employed primarily in halakhic, rather than haggadic, material.

[15] For discussions of midrashic exegesis from a religious-studies perspective, see J. Neusner, *What is Midrash?*; idem, *Midrash in Context: Exegesis in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); G. Porton, "Defining Midrash," in *The Study of Ancient Judaism I: Mishnah, Midrash, Siddur* (ed. J. Neusner; New York: 1981) 55–92; idem, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash: Texts and Commentary* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1985); idem, "Definitions of Midrash," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* 1:520–34. For discussions from a literary-critical perspective, see G. Hartman and S. Budick, ed., *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); G. Bruns, "Midrash and Allegory: The Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987) 625–46; J. Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," in *Midrash and Literature* 77–103; D. Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996); D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990). For the history of academic studies of midrash, see

these liberal camps often perceive the theological rationale of midrashic interpretation that I explain below, but they tend to undervalue it in their analyses because of their own anti-supernatural perspectives.[16] Perhaps the reason why evangelicals have not taken a lead in the study of ancient Jewish interpretation of the Bible is because of a latent desire to distance the NT from a Jewish hermeneutic milieu that is perceived to be unfriendly to an evangelical view of Scripture.[17] Many people think of midrashic exegesis as just a fanciful way of making Scripture say whatever one wants it to say—which, if that were true, would make it a hermeneutic that undermined biblical inspiration and authority. But the irony here is that midrashic exegesis is actually dependent upon the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the OT—a fact that even liberal scholars of midrashic literature have pointed out.[18] Evangelical scholarship is actually in the best position to appreciate fully the theological rationale of this Jewish method of exegesis.

In the following pages I want to explain the rationale of midrashic exegesis and show how it can provide the overall solution to the problem of the NT's use of the OT. To illustrate matters, I will analyze three traditionally puzzling cases of exegesis: the NT's interpretation of Ps 8:4–6, Ps 68:18, and Hos 11:1. Though space will not allow me to delve extensively into the ramifications of the NT's use of a midrashic methodology, I do hope that this study will facilitate further discussions of that important topic. Let me begin by contrasting the philosophy of this ancient Jewish hermeneutic with that of a grammatical-historical approach to the OT.

II. MIDRASHIC EXEGESIS VIS-À-VIS GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL EXEGESIS

If one reads the OT from a grammatical-historical point of view, one will interpret the words of a given passage according to their plain sense within

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T. Lim, "Origins and Emergence of Midrash in Relation to the Hebrew Bible," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* 2:595–612; Stern, *Midrash and Theory* 1–13.

[16] For example, while there is value in studies that explain midrashic exegesis according to literary-critical categories, if one treats midrashic exegesis only as an extreme case of literary "intertextuality," its fundamental theological impetus may be minimized or even overlooked entirely (see, e.g., Hays, *Echoes of Scripture* 154–78).

[17] Liberal biblical scholars have been more willing than conservatives to point out the Jewish nature of the NT's exegesis of the OT, yet these liberals—like many conservatives—often disparage the hermeneutic, since it departs from a strictly grammatical-historical method (e.g. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture* 8–9, 180; R. Grant, "Paul and the OT," in *The Authoritative Word* [ed. D. McKim; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983] 19–36; C. K. Barrett, "Old Testament in the New Testament," in *Authoritative Word* 37–58; H. Shires, *Finding the OT in the New* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974] 25–26, 35–38). In such cases, liberals and conservatives share the same problem: a misguided assumption that grammatical-historical exegesis is the only valid method of reading the Old Testament.

[18] E.g. Neusner, *What is Midrash?* 10–12; J. Kugel, "Ancient Biblical Interpretation and the Biblical Sage," in *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (ed. J. Kugel; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) 15–23. See n. 20 below.

the context of the particular biblical book where they are found.[19] Such a reader seeks to answer this question: what was the OT author saying to his original audience? When looking at a particular psalm of David, for example, one would ask, what meaning was in David's mind when he wrote the words of the psalm? Or, to take matters a bit further, what idea did the psalm convey to the Israelites of David's day as they sang it in their worship? Such is the grammatical-historical approach, and it is used today by all readers of the Bible, conservatives and liberals alike.

It should be noted, however, that the grammatical-historical approach does not require a belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture, for it is the same hermeneutic one would use to interpret any human document. So when this method is applied to an OT verse, it does not require one to assign authorial intent or relevance to every observable correlation between that verse and the words another biblical writer may have spoken at an earlier or later point in Israel's history. Similarities of wording or subject matter between passages in different OT books could be treated as mere happenstance, or as the result of a later writer borrowing material, perhaps even unconsciously, from an earlier writer. In any case, such interconnections between biblical passages might easily be viewed as carrying little or no exegetical weight.

But what if one regards the OT books as the ancient Jews did—as the verbally inspired word of God?[20] How might this affect the way one reads an OT verse? If every word of the OT is truly the utterance of God, then a given statement in one OT book would need to be considered not only within its own documentary context, but also in light of the broader contexts of the canon as a whole. The reason is twofold. First, one recognizes that the OT canon is something more than just an anthology of religious documents. These writings are the work of one divine author, who foreordained in eternity a plan for the world that he revealed gradually over time, using human spokesmen throughout Israel's history.[21]

[19] Different readers approach the Bible with different presuppositions and perspectives, all of which can affect what each person will see as the "plain" meaning of a text (see F. Kermode, "The Plain Sense of Things," in *Midrash and Literature* [ed. G. Hartman and S. Budick; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986] 179–94). Nevertheless, people are usually not poles apart and, in general, we may speak appropriately of the "plain" sense of the OT.

[20] There is no question that Jews of late antiquity held a high view of the inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, a fact that becomes readily apparent when one reads ancient Judaic literature. In the words of James Kugel, virtually all ancient interpreters presupposed that "Scripture is perfect and perfectly harmonious . . . [an] assumption [that] goes well beyond the rejection of apparent mistakes or inconsistencies. It posits a perfect harmony between the various parts." The homogeneous assumption of Jews of this period was that "all of Scripture is somehow divinely sanctioned, of divine provenance, or divinely inspired" (*The Bible As It Was* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1997] 20–23).

[21] Thus we see in the book of *Jubilees* the concept that the information of Scripture was inscribed on "heavenly tablets" long before the OT books were written (3:10; 6:17; 23:32; 30:9; cf. *1 Enoch* 81:1; 103:2; *T. Levi* 5:5). Similarly, the rabbinic literature speaks of the Torah that God revealed to Moses having already been in existence in heaven before the world was created, being kept hidden there by God until the time of its disclosure to Moses (*b. Shab.* 88b). The concept

Second, the actions of God in bringing his plan to fruition tend to be paradigmatic in nature.[22] That is, God works throughout history according to certain patterns; divine actions are reiterated throughout time and find their ultimate realization in the last days. This fact is the basis for the typologization that one observes throughout the Scriptures. With these two premises in place, a diligent reader of an OT passage would need to take note of any verbal or thematic parallels, analogies, or other correspondences with other statements in the rest of God's revelation wherever they might be found and whenever they might have been written. The presence of such interconnections would have to be viewed as the deliberate intention of the omniscient author of the OT.

This is exactly how the Jews approached their Scriptures. They read the OT not merely as a collection of different books written by different human authors on different occasions, but as if it were all one book. This book was the product of the mind of one Author who had declared to Israel in historical time the fundamental paradigmatic components of his eternal purpose. Therefore, the Scriptures God gave to Israel presented, in effect, a kind of mystery that was discernible through a consideration of the fullness of God's revelation.[23] Questions generated by an OT verse lacking complete or detailed information might find answers within an entirely different portion of Scripture.[24] Moreover, by considering the host of correlative aspects of Scripture, one gained potential insight into the fullness of God's eternal plan.

Now such a high view of the divine nature of the OT is precisely what the OT affirms about itself, and evangelicals would agree wholeheartedly with it. But since we are products of our modern western culture, we still tend to read a given OT statement only in a grammatical-historical manner, considering it almost exclusively from the perspective of the human author's understanding and point in time.[25] Of course we recognize that interconnections exist between numerous verses located in a variety of OT books, but we tend to treat all of this as something to be noted *after* the job of exegeting a

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appears to be that the human authors of the OT books were inspired to put down in earthly writing, one piece at a time throughout Israel's history, what God already had composed as a whole in eternity (cf. Matt 13:35; Eph 1:4).

[22] For a discussion of this concept in rabbinic Judaism, see J. Neusner, "Paradigmatic Versus Historical Thinking: The Case of Rabbinic Judaism," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* N.S. 11 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 163–92.

[23] Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* 17–18. The NT, of course, teaches this very point, but affirms that the mystery of the OT Scriptures is fully revealed through Christ (Mark 4:11; Rom 16:25; 2 Cor 3:14–16). The Qumran sectarians believed that the mystery was revealed through the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab 7:4–5; 1QS 11:5–6).

[24] Scholars of midrash describe this phenomenon as "gaps" in the OT text that prompted midrashic exegesis (see Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* 1–5 *et passim*). In contrast to what we commonly see in Jewish literature of late antiquity, the NT's midrashic exegesis was not for the purpose of explaining "gaps" in the text or settling halakhic disputes. The NT's purpose was to demonstrate Jesus' messiahship or otherwise support Christian doctrine.

[25] See the insightful article by V. S. Poythress, "The Presence of God Qualifying Our Notions of Grammatical-Historical Interpretation: Genesis 3:15 as a Test Case," *JETS* 50 (2007) 87–103.

passage has been accomplished—that is, at the point when we are trying to systematize the teaching of the OT. But the ancient Jews' high regard for the inspiration, unity, and paradigmatic nature of God's revelation caused them to regard such systematization of Scripture as part of the process of exegeting a verse itself. Let me explain.

Jewish exegetes kept in mind something that we may tend to overlook: the fact that, from the perspective of God in eternity, the Scriptures are really a "timeless unity in which each and every verse is simultaneous with every other, temporally and semantically."[26] As a result, the various contexts of Genesis through Malachi are ultimately all connected. So if a given verse is considered from that broader perspective, the words of the verse often call to mind an additional truth when they are read in the light of other contexts that God has revealed.[27] Words are vehicles of thought, and context is largely what gives them meaning. So when a Jewish reader saw that the words of a passage expressed another truth if they were read in a different, divinely revealed context, he concluded that such a phenomenon could not be coincidental; all such intertextual connections—and therefore the fuller or multiple significations of the text that those connections brought to mind—must have been in the mind of God when he inspired the human author to state those words in the first place.[28]

This procedure of reading the words of one OT context in light of another context is something that is graphically illustrated in rabbinic literature, particularly in midrash compilations such as Leviticus Rabbah and Genesis Rabbah. There, a base verse is quoted and interpreted in light of the context of another verse, and typically the second verse, the intertext, is quoted also. On some occasions, the intertext is so well known as to need no express quotation, but a recontextualized reading is performed nonetheless.[29] We see the same basic procedure in the *pesher* interpretations of Qumran. There the words of OT texts that, on a grammatical-historical level, spoke of themes and events at a given point in Israel's history are reread as if they were situated within the eschatological setting of which Scripture elsewhere speaks.[30] Such a procedure vividly highlights the parallel nature of the superimposed materials. In particular, Qumran interpreters read the words

[26] Stern, *Language of Exegesis* 108.

[27] M. Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) 1–2, 12–13.

[28] Neusner, *What is Midrash?* 11; Aaron, *Language and Midrash* 402–03.

[29] The normal NT practice is not to cite an intertext when giving a midrashic interpretation of an OT verse. At times this may be because of the well-known nature of the connection, but usually it is because Jesus himself serves, so to speak, as "the intertext." Jesus becomes the new, divinely revealed context in which OT statements are read.

[30] Resituating OT statements within an eschatological context—a process Jacob Neusner dubs "midrash as prophecy"—is what we see routinely in the sectarian literature of Qumran and in the NT (*What is Midrash?* 31–40). Many scholars point out that a primary purpose of midrashic exegesis was to make the Scriptures relevant to the current-day audience (e.g. J. Neusner, *What is Midrash?* 7–8; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis* 19–20). While this is true, in many instances this concept seems to be due to the presumption of the ultimately eschatological focus of Scripture and a group's belief that they themselves are living in the *eschaton*.

of OT texts within the context of the circumstances of the community and its founder, the Teacher of Righteousness. Because he was believed to be guided by the Holy Spirit, he and the community saw themselves as a part of God's revelatory corpus and therefore as a legitimate new context in which to read appropriate portions of the OT.[31]

Whenever a Jewish reader employed midrashic exegesis, a mere sentence or phrase within a psalm, prophetic oracle, strophe, pericope, or other section of OT material could find relevance and new meaning when read in a related new context; it was not necessary for the entire section of material to yield the midrashic reading.[32] For this reason, midrashic exegesis tended to look at the text of the OT atomistically. That fact has particularly puzzled novice readers of midrashic literature, because atomization of a text runs counter to what would be proper in grammatical-historical analysis. But due to the nature and purpose of midrashic exegesis, it was quite natural for a midrashic reading to treat the OT text atomistically. These matters have been well summarized by David Stern:

> The near identification of Torah and God provides the Rabbis with the basic axioms of midrashic hermeneutics: first, the belief in the omnisignificance of Scripture, in the meaningfulness of its every word . . . ; second, the claim of the essential unity of Scripture as the expression of the single divine will. From the first axiom proceeds the common midrashic technique of atomization, whereby verses and phrases, sometimes even single words, in Scripture are broken up into smaller units, which are then exploited in isolation for hermeneutical significance. From the second axiom derives the equally typical midrashic habit of viewing the Bible atemporally, of explaining Scripture through Scripture, and of connecting the most disparate and seemingly unrelated verses in order to create new and overreaching nexuses of meaning: in short, intertextuality that is elevated in midrash to the level of a virtual exegetical principle.[33]

The above analysis points us toward the fundamentally different aims of midrashic exegesis and grammatical-historical exegesis. Theologically speaking, the latter hermeneutic seeks to understand what was in the mind of the human author of an OT text, whereas the former seeks to understand something much more significant: what was in the mind of God. A midrashic reading of the OT is concerned not so much with what a human writer was thinking, but with what he, as God's mouthpiece, was prophesying. What he

[31] See L. Schiffman, "Biblical Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* 48–53; M. Bernstein, "Interpretation of Scriptures," in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. L. Schiffman and J. VanderKam; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 382. Fundamentally, this Qumran procedure is analogous to the NT's Christological reading of Scripture—i.e. reading the OT in terms of the life and person of Jesus Christ.

[32] This is an important point to understand when considering the NT's messianic interpretations of the Psalter. If a midrashic exegete read a verse of a psalm within a messianic context, it did not necessarily mean that he would view the entire psalm messianically. Thus, the fact that the NT applies a portion of a psalm to Jesus does not necessarily warrant our classifying the psalm as "a messianic psalm," if what we mean is that the psalm speaks exclusively and in its entirety of Jesus.

[33] Stern, *Midrash and Theory* 29.

prophesied were words expressing the thought of the Being who designed all of the interconnections running throughout Scripture—and this conception of God and his revelation is what prompted the act of recontextualizing the words of Scripture so as to bring out the full aspects of God's thought.[34]

With this theological rationale of midrashic exegesis set before us, let me now illustrate the procedure by analyzing some examples of NT exegesis of the OT. From a grammatical-historical perspective, these particular examples present us with very puzzling interpretations of the OT. But from a midrashic perspective, they become very understandable cases of exegesis.

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT'S INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 8:4–6

In Psalm 8, David marvels at the exalted position Yahweh bestowed upon man when he appointed him to "rule over the works of Your hands" and "put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas" (vv. 4–8). Alluding to Gen 1:26–28, David ponders the fact that the Creator gave dominion over all animal life to Adam and his descendants in the current world. This is the plain meaning of the psalm in its grammatical-historical context.[35] Yet Heb 2:5–9 and 1 Cor 15:24–28 interpret Ps 8:4–6 to be speaking of man's future exaltation in the eschatological kingdom, a time when the Messiah and his people will have dominion over angelic forces and even over death itself.[36] Nothing in the grammatical-historical

[34] The concept of *sensus plenior* has a place here (see n. 7 above). Midrashic hermeneutics also can encompass what scholars mean by a canonical-process reading of the OT (see n. 8 above), but these two methodologies should not be confused. A canonical-process approach looks to later revelation for elaboration on what an earlier passage, on a grammatical-historical level, was addressing. Midrashic exegesis actually recontextualizes the words of a passage and seeks new meaning for them within another biblical context.

[35] So P. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (WBC 19; Waco, TX: Word, 1983) 109–10; G. Guthrie and R. Quinn, "A Discourse Analysis of the Use of Psalm 8:4–6 in Hebrews 2:5–9," *JETS* 49 (2006) 236; F. Delitzsch, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1871) 148, 156–57; H. Kraus, *Psalms 1–59* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978, 1988) 185–86; idem, *Theology of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979, 1986) 202; A. Ash and C. Miller, *Psalms* (Austin, TX: Sweet, 1980) 54–55. Perhaps one could argue that, from a grammatical-historical reading of the psalm in its place in the Psalter, David's words implicitly allude to his current position of rulership and Israel's status in the world. But this is as far as a strictly grammatical-historical reading can take us. Breaking with virtually all commentators, James Smith affirms that a grammatical-historical analysis of Psalm 8 indicates that verses 5–8 refer not to the dominion God bestowed upon Adam and his descendants, but to the dominion God will bestow upon the future Messiah who is introduced in verse 4b under the designation "son of man" (*The Promised Messiah* 109–112). There are many problems with Smith's interpretation, but at the root of them all is his failure to recognize the poetic parallelism between the terms "man" and "son of man" in verse 4, and the fact that the animal life listed in verses 7–8 demarcates the nature of the dominion the psalmist has in mind.

[36] The writer of Hebrews cites Ps 8:4–6, and Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 cites Ps 8:6. Both NT authors interpret the psalm atomistically by ignoring verses 7–8, the immediately following lines that complete the psalmist's thought (begun in v. 6) by listing the various forms of animal life over which man has dominion. Cf. Eph 1:22 and Matt 21:16, passages that appear to imply eschatological-messianic interpretations of Ps 8:6 and 8:2, respectively.

context of the psalm suggests this eschatological idea.[37] Nor will it work to say that further revelation from God merely provided elaboration on what the psalmist was talking about,[38] for clearly that is not what the psalmist was talking about.

But what if we read Psalm 8 midrashically? To do so, we analyze the content of the psalm atomistically, looking at its wording not merely within its own grammatical-historical setting, but also in view of what is said in other portions of God's revelation. Accordingly, the psalmist's statement in verses 4–6 about man's dominion over all things can now call to our minds not only humanity's current Adamic rulership over the animal world, but also a greater kind of rulership that God has offered to human beings. We think of God's promise to Abraham concerning his offspring's eventual dominion over the whole world and over all of their enemies. This was a promise that David and the nation of Israel fulfilled in part during David's lifetime, but one that finds full realization only with the advent of the Messiah in the world to come (Isa 9:2–11; Jer 23:5–8). Indeed, in that messianic kingdom "man"—as represented by the Messiah and his people—is truly to "rule over the works of God's hands" and "all things are put under his feet" in the fullest sense. Wicked angelic forces will be subjugated and the promise of resurrection means that death will be defeated. So in addition to what the words of Ps 8:4–6 express when read within their original context, these same words express a more profound truth when reread within the context of God's revelation about the end time.

This is the rationale that explains the eschatological interpretation of Ps 8:4–6 that we see in Heb 2:5–9 and 1 Cor 15:24–28. Ancient Jews would not have deemed such a reading of the psalm unusual. Of course, there was novelty in the Christian affirmation that Jesus was the promised ruler of the kingdom of God and his followers its true citizenry, but there was nothing unusual about Christianity's eschatological interpretation of Psalm 8 itself.

[37] Peter Craigie, commenting on the NT's use of Psalm 8, says, "Its use in the early church reflects a new kind of interpretation in the context of the earliest church's christology. . . . In the early church, the words of the psalm describing mankind's role of dominion in the world (8:6–7) are given christological significance with respect to the dominion of Jesus Christ in his resurrection and exaltation. . . . In one sense, this is quite a new meaning, not evidently implicit in the psalm in its original meaning and context" (*Psalms* 109–10). Henry Shires lists Paul's use of Ps 8:6 as an example of the apostle's tendency to "pay no attention to the context of a cited passage. He may discover in an O.T. text ideas that were not present in the mind of the author of that text, and he may make an entirely new interpretation, even while retaining the words of the original passage" (*Finding the OT* 57).

[38] This kind of (canonical process) explanation of the NT's interpretation of Psalm 8 has been offered by R. Longenecker (*Biblical Exegesis* 181), T. Hewitt (*Epistle to the Hebrews* [TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, 1981] 66–67), and D. Moo ("*Sensus Plenior*" 207). Despite their assertions, it is obvious that the psalmist was talking about mankind's present position of honor over God's animal creation. There is nothing in Psalm 8 that, on a grammatical-historical basis, suggests for mankind a currently unrealized position of dominion requiring future fulfillment. The writer of Hebrews's observation (2:8) that all things currently are *not* subjected to man and so the words of Ps 8:4–6 await future fulfillment is an argument that actually assumes a midrashic reading of the psalm, not a grammatical-historical reading (see n. 39 below).

The Dead Sea Scrolls illustrate how common it was for Jewish interpreters to read the Psalter eschatologically. The authorship of Qumran's *pesher* commentaries on the psalms (4Q171, 1Q16, 4Q173) searched for statements in the Psalter that could be reread in terms of the last days and the events of the Qumran community. We also find in various Jewish writings an eschatological rereading of Gen 1:26–28, the very passage upon which the wording of Ps 8:4–6 is based. 2 Esdras 6:53–59 treats the Creator's declaration of lordship for Adam and his descendants as a reference to the lordship Israel now possesses, with its full realization occurring in the *eschaton* (cf. 7:11–13, 49–50). The Qumran scrolls tell of wicked angels being defeated when the messianic king leads his people in final victory; the offspring of Abraham will receive the "glory of Adam"—that is, they will obtain in the world to come an exalted status analogous to what Adam knew in Eden before the advent of sin and death (e.g. 1QS 4:19–22; CD 3:20; 1QM 16–18; 4Q285; 4Q521).

This conception is what one derives from the OT Scriptures when they are viewed as a whole. It is evident that God intended the end-time exaltation of his people to be a reiteration of the original Adamic lordship over creation. In light of this fact, one might ask how a knowledgeable OT reader could ever read Psalm 8 and *not* think of God's eschatological promise to man when contemplating phrases like "You make him to rule over the works of your hands" and "You have put all things under his feet"! The NT's interpretation of Psalm 8 becomes quite logical, therefore, if treated as a case of midrashic exegesis.[39] When the psalm is viewed from the standpoint of what the entirety of the OT reveals about God's eternal plan, it is evident that the words of verses 4–6 not only can speak on a grammatical-historical level of the dominant position of human beings in the current world, but they can also be recontextualized to express on another level the more glorious position of the Messiah and his people in the world to come.[40]

[39] The atomistic nature of midrashic exegesis sometimes opens up multiple ways of reading an OT phrase. For example, when Psalm 8's phrase "under *his* feet" is read midrashically, the antecedent of the word "his" can be taken as either man generically (as represented by the Messiah and his people) or as the Messiah specifically. A reader might focus upon either reading or play upon both ideas. The writer of Hebrews does the latter in 2:8–9. When considered in light of God's total revelation, the psalm's statement about man's dominion over the world can be pressed to an absolute degree and reread, in effect, as a promise of man's future dominion over all things, even angelic beings. (The LXX's use of βραχύ τι ["for a little while"] to translate the Hebrew text's description of man's current position under the angels [Ps 8:5] helped to facilitate this rereading.) In this way, the writer of Hebrews interprets the psalm as a promise that is not yet fulfilled, because all things are not yet under the feet of the Messiah's people. But, he says, since the Messiah himself is reigning and all things are currently under the Messiah's feet, Christians can have confidence that the words of the psalm will one day find full realization and the promise be fulfilled. Similarly, the phrase "son of man" in Ps 8:4 can be read midrashically in two ways: as a reference to human beings, or as the title (based upon Dan 7:14) by which Jesus designated himself during his ministry. The writer of Hebrews (2:5–9) seems to play upon both of these readings (C. Koester, *Hebrews* [AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001] 220–21).

[40] There is a strong thematic and verbal connection between Psalm 8 and Psalm 110. The latter presented a picture of an ideal Israelite king that, ultimately, had to be interpreted messianically. According to Ps 110:1, God will make this king's enemies "a footstool for his feet"—language

This technique of recontextualizing a portion of Scripture so that it calls to mind other divinely revealed truths is a fundamental aspect of midrashic exegesis. If—a Jewish exegete would ask—these intertextual ideas come to our minds when we read a given passage, then how could God not have been thinking of the same thing when he first inspired the OT author to say the words that he did? This is why midrashic hermeneutics is properly defined as a form of exegesis, not eisegesis. Theologically speaking, a midrashic reading of Scripture seeks to bring to light the fullness of what was in God's mind as he inspired an OT statement, notwithstanding the statement's grammatical-historical meaning.[41] Now this explanation of the matter does not mean that the human author of a passage was necessarily aware of the polysemy of his words as he composed the text; biblical inspiration need not require such knowledge on the part of a prophet (cf. 1 Pet 1:10–12; John 11:51).[42] But what a midrashic reading does mean is that the fullness of truths that the words of the OT can evoke when considered in light of God's full revelation must have been intended by God when he initially guided the human author's wording.

IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT'S INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 68:18

Traditionally, one of the most puzzling cases of NT exegesis of the OT is found in Ephesians 4, where Paul provides an interpretation of Ps 68:18. The OT passage reads,

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reminiscent of the statement in Ps 8:6, "You have put all things under his feet." Thus, an eschatological interpretation of Psalm 110 went hand in hand with a (midrashic) eschatological interpretation of Psalm 8, which is exactly what we see in Heb 1:13–2:9 and in 1 Cor 15:24–28, where both psalms are quoted. An eschatological reading of Psalm 8 may also have been assisted by connecting David's reference to "the son of man" (who has dominion over all animals on land or in the sea) with the "son of man" figure in Daniel 7, who is given dominion over the four beasts that rise from the sea (C. H. Dodd, "OT in the New," in *Right Doctrine* 174).

[41] This fullness of meaning can be described as the *sensus plenior* of an OT text, and some have tried to categorize the NT's interpretation of Ps 8:4–6 simply as the phenomenon of *sensus plenior* (e.g. D. Hagner, "OT in the NT" 102). But this explanation does not, in itself, explain how such an interpretation of the psalm is derived (except to say that God miraculously revealed it to the NT writers), and it may also erroneously imply that the "fuller meaning" is only an elaboration on what the psalmist was talking about. This is why it is better to explain the NT's interpretation of Ps 8:4–6 as a case of midrashic exegesis—an exegetical process that brings out the fuller, or even multiple meanings of an OT text by resituating its words within the context of other, correlative portions of God's revelation. See n. 34 above.

[42] This issue, of course, has been vigorously debated through the years—both generally and with regard to the specific meaning of 1 Pet 1:10–12 (see, e.g., W. Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in G. Beale, ed., *Right Doctrine* 55–69, and P. Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," in *Right Doctrine* 70–81; cf. W. E. Glenny, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations," *JETS* 38 [1995] 481–500). In the present case, it could be that as David composed Psalm 8 he was conscious of the fact that his statements about man's current dominion over the world fit also with a divine promise about man's future dominion over a world to come—but nothing in Psalm 8 indicates that this was David's thinking.

> You have ascended on high,
> You have led captive your captives;
> You have received gifts among men [or, given gifts to men].[43]

The psalmist was recounting Yahweh's defeat of the enemies of Israel as he led the nation into the promised land and ascended Mount Zion to inhabit his dwelling place and receive gifts of homage. That idea is what Ps 68:18 conveys when read in a grammatical-historical manner.[44] But in Eph 4:7–12 Paul gives this OT verse quite a different interpretation.

> To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that he also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is himself also he who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints.[45]

[43] There is a major textual-critical issue here. See n. 45 below.

[44] So D. Kidner, *Psalms 1–72* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973) 238–45; Ash and Miller, *Psalms* 222–30; M. Tate, *Psalms 50–100* (WBC 20; Dallas: Word, 1990) 159–86; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974) 495; A. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word, 1990) 242; H. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 528. Psalm 68 poses more problems for interpreters than perhaps any other psalm because of its obscure historical background and structure, difficulties of translation, and variations in textual form. There are questions about the meaning of particular verses, including aspects of verse 18 (such as whether Yahweh receives or gives gifts and, if the former, whether he receives them from defeated enemies or loyal subjects). Even so, there is widespread agreement about the basic meaning of Psalm 68, including verse 18: the psalmist was celebrating Yahweh's OT victory over the enemies of Israel. It is clear, therefore, that a grammatical-historical exegesis of Ps 68:18 cannot give us the interpretation Paul assigns. M. Tate says that what Paul offers is a "radical reinterpretation" (*Psalms 50–100* 181). H. Hoehner says, "It must be acknowledged that Ps 68:18 has been changed by Paul to make it applicable to the present Ephesian context" (*Ephesians* 528). J. Smith admits that "without the instruction of the Holy Spirit through Paul interpreters probably never would have seen the ascension of Christ in this verse" (*The Promised Messiah* 204).

[45] There are several textual-critical issues pertaining to Paul's citation of Ps 68:18, two of which merit attention here. First, the apostle's quotation departs from the MT and LXX by using third-person rather than second-person verbs. This alteration, however, does not affect the essential meaning of the OT verse. Of greater significance is the fact that Paul employs a text form that reads "[God] *gave* gifts to men," whereas both the MT and LXX read "[God] *received* gifts among men." The Peshitta agrees with Paul's text form, as does Justin's quotation of the OT verse (*Dialogue* 39), though in both cases this could be due to influence from Ephesians itself. Interestingly, the *Psalms Targum* also agrees with Paul's text form, as does the possible allusion to Ps 68:18 in the *Testament of Dan* (5:10–11), a pseudepigraphic work usually assigned a date in the 2d century BC (see M. Wilcox, "Text Form," in *It Is Written* 198–99; Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination* 71). The form of Paul's citation could manifest his desire to use an interpretive text which reflected the idea that the gifts God received provided a return blessing benefiting the entirety of his subjects—an idea perhaps suggested by other verses of the psalm (viz. vv. 11–12, 19–20, 28–35) as well as the biblical concept that God does not require gifts from men for his own sake. This form of the text could have arisen from years of Jewish reflection on the psalm, and perhaps was well known. See the discussions in Silva, "NT Use of the OT" 160–61; G. Archer and G. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1983) xxviii–ix, 73; Hoehner, *Ephesians* 524–39;

Paul says that Ps 68:18 speaks of Christ's incarnation and ascension into heaven. The apostle takes statements that clearly referred to the actions of Yahweh regarding OT Israel and interprets these statements as references to Christ's actions regarding his church. Employing a variant text form of verse 18, Paul treats the "gifts" of this verse as something given rather than received—and he says that the psalmist's statement refers to the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers whom Christ gives as gifts to his church! Surely the OT Israelites never understood the psalm in this way as they used it in their temple worship, nor could God have expected them to do so.[46] So, we ask, how can Paul's exegesis be legitimate? The answer lies in the fact that Paul is reading the psalm midrashically, which in this case means that he is reading it within the context of God's final revelation concerning Jesus Christ.

Before elaborating Paul's use of the psalm, let me point out that his procedure of applying to Jesus OT statements about Yahweh parallels the way that ancient Jews midrashically applied statements about Yahweh to the agents through whom he functioned. For example, God had declared in Scripture that he would make Moses "as God to Pharaoh" (Exod 7:1), and this special role of Moses as God's agent seems to be the impetus behind the Jewish practice of taking certain biblical declarations about Yahweh's actions and applying them to Moses. Both the *Psalms Targum* and the rabbinic literature take the words of Ps 68:18—the very passage we are discussing—and interpret these words to be speaking of Moses because he "ascended on high" to receive the Torah atop Mount Sinai (*b. Shab.* 89a; *Midr. Ps.* 68.11). Ancient Jews also took OT statements about Yahweh and applied them to the angels through whom he functioned.

For example, one of the Qumran scrolls (11Q13) quotes Ps 82:1—"God (*elohim*) takes his stand in his own congregation; he judges in the midst of the rulers"—and reads these words as referring to the actions of Michael

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R. Taylor, "The Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 in Light of the Ancient Versions," *BSac* 148 (1991) 328–36; and the extensive discussion by W. H. Harris III in *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7–11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 96–104.

[46] W. Kaiser gives a very strained exegesis of Ps 68:18, claiming that the verse refers to a preincarnate appearance of the Messiah on Mount Sinai and his taking Levites "captive" for the service of Israel before ascending to heaven (*The Messiah in the OT* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995] 130–33). Relying heavily upon G. Smith ("Paul's Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8," *JETS* 18 [1975] 181–89), Kaiser bases his view on Num 8:14–19, where God takes the Levites for service at the sanctuary. Kaiser claims that his interpretation of the psalm is what anyone using grammatical-historical exegesis should be able to derive. He is at pains to explain Paul's reading of the psalm as a case of grammatical-historical exegesis, because he believes that such can be the only legitimate manner of interpreting the OT. Resorting to the concept of generic promise, he asserts that Ps 68:18 gives a general picture of the persons whom Christ takes as captives and gives as gifts, a group comprised of Levites (in OT times) and apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (in NT times). One of the problems with Kaiser's view is that the "captives" in Psalm 68 are clearly God's defeated enemies, a depiction that hardly fits with the OT's portrayal of the Levites (see Hoehner, *Ephesians* 527–28). Furthermore, a grammatical-historical analysis of Ps 68:18 certainly does not suggest that the one who "ascended on high" was the Messiah who descended from heaven to Mount Sinai.

the archangel. This was because Scripture sometimes used the word *elohim* to refer to angels, and Michael was understood to be the angel who would execute judgment on Yahweh's behalf (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1).[47] There is no reason to think that the author of the Qumran document would have denied that Ps 82:1 spoke, on the surface level, of Yahweh himself.[48] But reading the verse midrashically, he interpreted these words on another level as a reference to Michael, Yahweh's agent of judgment. NT Christianity, of course, affirmed that Jesus the Messiah was the one who would execute judgment on Yahweh's behalf—and as God (*elohim*) in the flesh, Jesus was greater than any angel. So it is not surprising to see the NT taking OT statements about the deeds of Yahweh and reading them as references to Jesus, for he was the incarnation of Yahweh and the one through whom Yahweh functioned.[49]

Returning now to Ephesians 4, I affirm that Paul is not rejecting the grammatical-historical intent of Psalm 68. The apostle surely understood that, in its original OT context, the psalm praised Yahweh's march to the promised land, defeat of the Canaanites, and triumphant ascent of Mount Zion. But the OT prophets had revealed that God's greatest triumph would occur in the last days when he established his kingdom through the Messiah and defeated every enemy once and for all. So Paul is rereading Psalm 68 within that eschatological context. Ancient Jews did too, as the Qumran scrolls and Babylonian Talmud illustrate (1Q16; *b. Pes.* 118b). The apostle, however, is doing more than that. Since Christians knew that Jesus was the Messiah and that God had come in the person of Jesus to conquer every spiritual foe, Paul affirms an eschatological reading of the psalmist's words within the context of what God had accomplished through Jesus. The Son of God was the one through whom God functioned and who now reigned

[47] J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York: Doubleday, 1995) 162; G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 2004) 532–34. In this scroll, Michael is given the title "Melchizedek."

[48] Scholars sometimes make the mistake of assuming that if a document gives a midrashic interpretation of an OT verse, its author must be rejecting the grammatical-historical meaning of the text. For example, R. Longenecker claims that the eschatological interpretations of the OT prophetic books that we observe in the Qumran *pesher* texts indicate that the Qumran community thought these prophetic books spoke exclusively of the last days rather than having any contemporary meaning for the prophet's own day: "[The Qumran sectarians] did not think of the particular prophecies in question as the message of God which was significant in an earlier period and now, *mutatis mutandis*, also relevant to them. Rather, they looked upon these selected passages as being exclusively concerned with them" (*Biblical Exegesis* 39). But there is no reason to presume that a midrashic interpreter who gives an eschatological interpretation to a passage thereby denies the plain meaning of the text and its application in its original context. While midrashic hermeneutics may treat the plain meaning as secondary or even irrelevant to the purpose at hand, it is not opposed to grammatical-historical exegesis, and the intertextual connections that generate midrashic interpretation are related to the plain meaning of the verses in question. NT writers who state (or even argue) a midrashic interpretation of an OT verse should not be thought of as necessarily claiming that their interpretation is the exclusive meaning of the passage (see Bernstein, "Interpretation of Scriptures" 378).

[49] We see the same phenomenon, for example, in Hebrews 1 where OT texts that in their original contexts referred to Yahweh (viz. Deut 32:43 and Ps 102:25–27) are interpreted as referring to Jesus the Son of God.

triumphantly in the heavenly Zion. It was quite fitting, therefore, to interpret the words of Psalm 68 in light of Jesus, for he truly "ascended on high" and "led captive a host of captives."

Commenting specifically on verse 18 of the psalm, Paul says, "Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that he also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is himself also he who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things." The OT depicted Yahweh as "descending" from heaven in order to travel with the Israelites to the promised land where he would defeat Israel's enemies and be enthroned atop Mount Zion (Exod 19:20; 40:34–38). Paul points out that Yahweh's eschatological exaltation also required him to "descend" before ascending to glory—i.e. he came down to this world in the person of Jesus, was slain, and then resurrected from the dead before ascending to his heavenly throne.[50] Furthermore, just as Yahweh's exaltation atop earthly Zion had meant blessings for his OT people, so the exaltation of Christ to heavenly Zion resulted in an outpouring of spiritual gifts for Christ's church in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

So when we look at Paul's exegesis of Psalm 68 in terms of midrashic hermeneutics, the rationale for his interpretation becomes clear. Taking note of an additional point may help us as well. I mentioned earlier the "ascent" of Moses to the presence of God on Sinai. That unique event generated discussion among ancient Jews about Moses' virtual enthronement as ruler over the people of Israel, and this conception of Moses' role is evidenced in Jewish documents prior to Paul's writing of Ephesians (viz. *Exagōgē* 68–89; *Vita Mosis* 1.155–158).[51] The Targum of Psalm 68:18 explains the verse as referring to Moses' ascension of Mount Sinai to receive the Law and give it to men: "You ascended to the firmament, Prophet Moses; you led captive captivity; you learned the words of Torah; you gave them as gifts to the sons of men."[52]

At some point in time, this manner of interpreting Ps 68:18 in terms of Moses became for Jews a standard midrashic reading of the verse.[53] The Targum's unusual text form—wherein the "gifts" of verse 18 are given to men rather than received from them—corresponds with the text form of Paul's citation.[54] It may be, therefore, that Paul is playing off this Jewish conception of Moses in his interpretation of Ps 68:18. Christians—rather than emphasizing Moses as the agent of God who ascended Mount Sinai to serve as Israel's authoritative lawgiver—needed to give their loyalty to Jesus, the

[50] Some interpreters of Ephesians have suggested that the "descent" of Christ that Paul has in mind is one that occurred *after* his ascension to heaven—viz. when Christ returned to the earth, so to speak, in the person of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (e.g. Lincoln, *Ephesians* 244–48; Harris, *Descent* 171–97). For a critique of this view, see Hoehner, *Ephesians* 531–33.

[51] Collins, *Scepter* 144–45. OT texts such as Exod 7:1 and Deut 33:5 (where the phrase "king in Jeshurun" could be read as if it were a reference to Moses) may have contributed to this conception of the nation's lawgiver.

[52] Translated by W. H. Harris (*Descent of Christ* 65).

[53] For an extensive discussion of this matter, see Harris, *Descent of Christ* 64–142.

[54] See n. 45 above.

incarnation of God and the one who ascended to heaven so that he might rule on the heavenly throne and give men the spiritual blessing of God's final revelation.[55]

V. THE NEW TESTAMENT'S INTERPRETATION OF HOSEA 11:1

Let me turn now to a final case of NT exegesis of the OT—one that many Bible believers consider the most troubling case of all. In Matt 2:14–15, the evangelist recounts the holy family's flight to Egypt to escape the fury of Herod: "So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called My Son.'" The problem, of course, is that the passage Matthew cites—Hos 11:1—is not a prophecy about the future at all, much less a prophecy about the Messiah. It is a statement about Israel's past deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Hosea was rebuking his people for rejecting the God who had brought them safely out of Egypt as a young, fledgling nation:

> When Israel was a child, I loved him,
> and out of Egypt I called my son.
> The more I called them,
> the more they went from me;
> they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
> and burning incense to idols.
> Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk.
> I took them up in my arms;
> but they did not know that I healed them.
> I led them with cords of human kindness,
> with bands of love.
> I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.
> I bent down to them and fed them. (NRSV)

The fact that Hosea was not talking about what Matthew claims he was talking about is something so obvious that liberal biblical scholars commonly point to this OT citation as a clear example of the NT's supposed propensity for invalid proof-texting and flawed exegesis.[56]

[55] M. Barth, *Ephesians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 475–76; Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination* 71. R. Taylor thinks this view unlikely because Paul does not explicitly mention the features of the Targum so as to make his argumentation evident to his readers ("Use of Psalm 68:18" 326–27). But if the Targum's interpretation of Ps 68:18 was well known, then Paul's comments would seem to be sufficient to have made it obvious to an audience what it was he was refuting. Even so, the real point here is not that Paul was necessarily refuting the Targum itself, but that he may have been refuting the exalted conception of Moses and the Law that was commonplace among the Jews of his day, a conception that we see evidenced in the Targum.

[56] "The interpretation of Hosea 11:1 not only illustrates how early Christians found a meaning entirely foreign to the original; it may also show how incidents in the story of Jesus have been inferred from the OT. . . . [This] indicates how desperately early Christians searched the Scriptures to find proof for the things happening among them" (S. V. McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures," *JBL* 80 [1961] 143–48; reprinted in G. Beale, ed., *Right Doctrine* 146–52; the quote comes from p. 149). See also Beegle, *Inspiration of Scripture* 81–83; Shires, *Finding the OT* 48; Evans and Berent, *Fundamentalism* 129–30.

It is futile to try to defend Matthew's messianic interpretation of Hos 11:1 on grammatical-historical grounds, yet some evangelical scholars have tried to do so nonetheless. Walter Kaiser argues that Hosea's use of sonship language in this verse—specifically the grammatically singular "my son"—was intended by the prophet to express the corporate solidarity of all Israel in their filial relationship to God, and included within this generic group of people receiving God's love and protection was the messianic son of God. For Kaiser, Matthew is simply pointing out a specific occasion when God's paternal protection of Israel was demonstrated—viz. an occasion in the life of Jesus.[57] A major problem with Kaiser's view is that even if one accepted the existence of a clearly perceived messianism as early as Hosea's day and the potentially messianic nuances of the OT's sonship language, there still is nothing in the literary context of Hos 11:1 to indicate that what the prophet had in mind was the corporate body of Israel inclusive of the future Messiah—and certainly nothing to suggest that the Messiah would experience his own divine call from Egypt. It smacks of special pleading to assert, as Kaiser does, that Matthew's real purpose in appealing to this OT verse is to emphasize God's care and protection of the Messiah rather than the geographical location (Egypt) from which God summoned him.[58] It is obvious that the early portion of the Gospel seeks to highlight Jesus' connections with several geographical sites (viz. Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Galilee), each of which are said to constitute a fulfillment of Scripture (2:1–23; 4:12–16).

More recently, John Sailhamer has argued that a grammatical-historical reading of Hos 11:1 within its larger context does square with Matthew's interpretation of the verse if we think of the book of Hosea in terms of the canonical theory of Brevard Childs.[59] Sailhamer starts with Childs's view

[57] Kaiser, *Uses of the OT in the New* 47–53; idem, *Toward an OT Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 101–3; idem, *Messiah in the OT* 35. D. A. Carson has affirmed a similar view (*Matthew* [EBC 8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984] 91–93). Carson does not argue that the OT prophet must have been thinking of the Messiah when he spoke the words of Hos 11:1, but he does affirm that, due to God's revelation up to that point in time, the prophet was at least aware of the messianic nuances of the sonship language he was applying to Israel. Cf. the view of James Smith, who is so desperate to explain Matthew's messianic exegesis of Hos 11:1 on grammatical-historical grounds that he speculates that the OT verse was originally not part of the section of material containing verses 2–4 and denies that the verse says anything about the nation of Israel (*The Promised Messiah* 239–42).

[58] Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT* 35. If we take Kaiser's view, it seems odd that Matthew would cite the second line of Hos 11:1 and not the (more pertinent?) first line, "When Israel was a child, I loved him." Also, contrary to Kaiser's contention, Matthew's placement of the citation of Hos 11:1 at the point in the narrative where the holy family journeys to Egypt (2:15) rather than after their return to Palestine (2:21) does not negate the evangelist's obvious intention to highlight the geographical location from whence God summoned the young Messiah. Placing the citation where he does allows the evangelist's narration of the return trip to focus entirely upon the ultimate destination of Nazareth. It also allows him to present the exodus motif *before* the exile motif of verses 16–18, thus maintaining the logical sequence of the two (R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* [New York: Doubleday, 1993] 219–20; Hagner, *Matthew* 36). See also n. 60 below.

[59] Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1" 87–96; idem, "Messiah and the Hebrew Bible" 16–17. See B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 377–81.

that, in its later compositional stages, the book of Hosea took on the idea of eschatological hope as its overall thrust. Moving beyond Childs, Sailhamer argues that the OT prophet himself understood that Israel's past exodus from Egypt would be recapitulated in the last days when the Messiah delivered the full complement of God's people from exile—a concept Hosea derived from reading the Pentateuch. For Hosea, the term "Egypt" became a metaphor for exile, so the statement in 11:1 about God's calling Israel out of Egypt did not look backward to the historical exodus, but forward to the eschatological exodus. In this way, contends Sailhamer, Hos 11:1 did indeed point to the future Messiah just as Matthew says. Sailhamer's view is open to several objections, not the least of which are his premises that a strictly grammatical-historical reading of the Pentateuch reveals a fully developed messianic eschatology and that Moses used Israel's exodus from Egypt as a metaphor for the same. But even if one were to grant Sailhamer's contentions on these points, there still is nothing in the context of Hos 11:1 to suggest that the prophet Hosea intended to imply anything about the future Messiah when he spoke of God having called Israel from Egypt—and certainly nothing to suggest that the Messiah himself would be summoned from Egypt. Sailhamer's proposition that Matthew gives the grammatical-historical sense of Hos 11:1 does not stand up to scrutiny.[60]

In all candor, we must ask this question: Is not the real reason why Sailhamer and Kaiser "see" the Messiah in Hos 11:1 because Matthew put in their minds the idea of reading Hosea's words in that way, and not because of any so-called grammatical-historical analysis? To put it another way: had the evangelist never included this fulfillment citation in his Gospel, would these commentators have ever thought of interpreting Hos 11:1 in the way that they do?

Due to the insurmountable obstacles in trying to explain Matthew's exegesis on grammatical-historical grounds, most scholars have simply classified the evangelist's use of Hos 11:1 as a case of typology: Matthew saw Israel's exodus from Egypt as an event that foreshadowed Jesus' own "exodus" from Egypt.[61] This kind of typological correspondence between the history of Israel

[60] See the critique of Sailhamer's article by McCartney and Enns, "Response to John Sailhamer" 97–105. They suggest that Matthew interprets the reference to "Egypt" in Hos 11:1 as a symbol for wicked Israel: "For Matthew, literal Israel has become 'Egypt' and the king of literal Israel (Herod) is a new 'Pharaoh' that tries to kill the promised deliverer by slaughtering infants, whereas literal Egypt becomes a place of refuge" (p. 103). Matthew's conception of matters could have begun by his noting that Egypt, which in the OT had been the place from which Israel needed deliverance, had become in the case of the infant Jesus just the opposite, a place of refuge—and Israel, which in the OT had been a place of refuge, had become in the case of Jesus a place from which to flee. All of this, posit McCartney and Enns, was part of the NT's eschatological reversal theme, wherein OT place names are symbolized in ways that reflect the opposite of their OT significance. If McCartney and Enns are correct, this helps explain why Matthew quotes Hos 11:1 at the point when he recounts the holy family's flight from Israel into Egypt rather than when he recounts their return from Egypt.

[61] See, e.g., S. L. Johnson, Jr., *OT in the New* 55; Bock, "Use of the OT in the New" 111–12; R. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," *NTS* 27 (1981) 233–51; D. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC 33a; Dallas: Word, 1993) 36–37. Some scholars

and Jesus makes sense as far as it goes, but I doubt whether many evangelicals feel completely comfortable with that explanation of Matthew's use of this OT text. The simple fact of the matter is that the evangelist claims that this event in young Jesus' life fulfilled (ἵνα πληρωθῇ) what the OT prophet said, and even if we understand Matthew's fulfillment language very broadly, it still is impossible to avoid the impression that he is offering an interpretation of Hos 11:1. Matthew appears to be claiming that the OT prophet spoke of the Egyptian sojourn of Jesus' infancy—yet the problem for us is that this event in Jesus' life is clearly not what Hosea was talking about. So typologization alone cannot fully explain the evangelist's citation of the Hosea passage. To put it bluntly, Matthew appears to be reading Hos 11:1 out of context. It is as if he has plucked the words of the OT prophet from their original setting and is now reading them within the context of the life of infant Jesus.

I affirm that what Matthew appears to be doing is exactly what he*is* doing! We will have the ultimate solution to the evangelist's puzzling bit of exegesis if we recognize that he is interpreting Hos 11:1 midrashically—a procedure that allows him to recontextualize the words of the prophet and interpret them within the life setting of Jesus. By doing so, Matthew points out in the strongest way possible the correlation between the past history of Israel and Israel's eschatological king. The reason why the evangelist presents this as if it were an exegesis of the Hosea passage is because that is exactly what it is—an exegesis not of the mind of Hosea, but an exegesis of the words that he spoke—words that originated in the mind of God who designed the typological correspondence between Israel and the Messiah in accordance with his eternal plan. Matthew's point is that it was God who had that correspondence in view when he first spoke through Hosea, and so the prophet's words possessed inherently an additional meaning—one that found actualization when God summoned the infant Messiah from Egypt.

We should notice that, in true midrashic fashion, Matthew interprets the text of Hosea atomistically. Though the evangelist quotes the second line of Hos 11:1 and reads it in terms of Jesus, he omits from his citation the first line, "When Israel was a child, I loved him." The designation "Israel" was simply not a word that could be reread with reference to the Messiah as readily as the phrase "my son." Nor does Matthew include in his quotation the subsequent verses of Hosea 11 (vv. 2–4) or in any way try to connect them with Jesus—even though they continue the sonship imagery of verse 1 and complete the prophet's homiletic thought. I suggest that the reason is that these subsequent verses drop the masculine singular nouns and pronouns of

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categorize Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 as typology combined with corporate solidarity (e.g. Longenecker, "Who is the Prophet Talking About?" 5–6; reprinted in Beale, *Right Doctrine* 377; Snodgrass, "Use of the OT in the New" 419). W. D. Davies and D. Allison suggest that we understand Matthew's view of the typology in this way: Israel's historical exodus from Egypt foreshadowed Jesus' eschatological deliverance of God's people in exile—a future hope that was anticipated by Jesus' own exodus-experience as a child (*Matthew* [3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988] 1:263).

verse 1 and begin using plural terms to express the sonship idea. Only the singular terminology of verse 1 could be reread so as to refer to Jesus.[62] Moreover, verses 2–4 speak of the Israelites' continual rebellion against their father Yahweh—a behavior that found no parallel with Jesus.[63]

Let me now delve a bit further into the reasons behind Matthew's midrashic reading of Hos 11:1, looking especially at what may have prompted him to reread the words of this verse in a messianic context. The language of Hos 11:1, "Out of Egypt I called my son," is reminiscent of several earlier OT texts. Hosea's language of sonship is based, of course, upon Exod 4:22, where God commanded Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, my firstborn." The concept is drawn from the royal motifs of the ancient world where an earthly king was declared to be the son of the nation's chief deity, ruler over the deity's kingdom, and beneficiary of his love.[64] As Yahweh's son, the nation of Israel possessed this kind of royal status, and Scripture later applies the same sonship imagery to David's entire royal seed, including the Davidic Messiah (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:26–27; Ps 2:7). For ancient Jews, therefore, the correlation between Israel as God's firstborn son and the Messiah as God's firstborn son was quite evident, and this correlation alone would have made Matthew's rereading of the sonship language of Hos 11:1 in terms of Jesus an easy and natural midrashic maneuver.

But I believe there was more than this behind Matthew's choice of texts. As many commentators have noted, Hosea's statement about Israel's divine call to come "out of Egypt" is reminiscent of the four major oracles of Balaam in Numbers 23–24.[65] These oracles spoke of God's bringing Israel out of Egypt in order to receive the inheritance of Canaan. With each successive oracle, Balaam focuses less on the nation and more on the nation's future king who, on behalf of king Yahweh, would lead Israel in subjugating the adjacent nations of Moab, Edom, and Amalek (cf. Num 23:21–22; 24:7–8, 17–19). It seems that the future "king" whom Balaam envisions is (primarily) David, the head of the nation's premier dynasty and the one who brought under Israelite control the very nations Balaam specifies (2 Sam 8:1–14).[66] But

[62] The masculine-singular sonship terminology of verse 1 is found only in the MT, the textual form with which Matthew's quotation corresponds. The LXX renders the passage as follows: ἐξ Αἰγύπτου μετεκάλεσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ ("Out of Egypt I called his [i.e. Israel's] children").

[63] One can imagine how Matthew might routinely have highlighted this midrashic interpretation of Hos 11:1 for a Jewish-Christian audience by asking the question (in a format similar to what we find in rabbinic literature), "Why does this verse use the singular number while the subsequent verses use the plural?" The answer: "Because this verse speaks not only about what God did with our nation, but also about what God did with our Messiah."

[64] See C. Gadd, *Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) 22–45; E. James, "The Sacral Kingship and the Priesthood," in *The Sacral Kingship* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 110–36.

[65] E.g. R. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 94; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1:262–63; Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1" 93–95.

[66] So R. K. Harrison, *Numbers* (WEC; Chicago: Moody, 1990) 323; G. Wenham, *Numbers* (TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981) 182; R. Allen, "The Theology of the Balaam Oracles," in *Tradition and Testament* (ed. J. Feinberg and P. Feinberg; Chicago: Moody, 1981) 118, n. 68;

Jewish interpreters of late antiquity commonly read these oracles midrashically, and in doing so they treated certain words of the fourth oracle—viz. "a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel" (Num 24:17)—as applicable to the promised Messiah who would conquer all the nations of the world.[67] Matthew's own account of the star that heralded the birth of Jesus (2:1–10) seems predicated upon this prophecy of Balaam.

The same kind of messianic interpretation appears to have been given to the following words of Balaam's third oracle (Num 24:7–8):

> Water will flow from his [i.e. Israel's] buckets,
> and his seed will be by many waters,
> and his king shall be higher than Agag,
> and his kingdom shall be exalted.
> God brings him out of Egypt;
> He is for him like the horns of the wild ox.
> He will devour the nations who are his adversaries,
> and will crush their bones in pieces,
> and shatter them with his arrows.

The LXX translation of this passage focuses even more attention on the king than does the MT, and most scholars believe that an underlying messianic interpretation explains the LXX's rendering of verses 7–8: "There will come a man from his [i.e. Israel's] seed, and he will rule over many nations. And the kingdom of Gog will be lifted up, and his kingdom will be increased. God led him out of Egypt."[68] It seems dubious to suppose with some scholars that the Greek version of Num 24:7–8 was the cause of Matthew's messianic interpretation of Hos 11:1,[69] for the text form of Matthew's quotation corre-

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R. D. Cole, *Numbers* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000) 420. The word "king" in Num 24:7 (cf. v. 17) probably refers to the *state* of kingship in Israel's future history, yet David seems to be the primary referent due to his subjugation of Moab, Edom, and Amalek. Saul's defeat of the Amalekites, as well as the battles of David's successors who reconquered the Moabites and Edomites, may also be in view. Many conservative commentators speak of an eschatological or messianic tone to Balaam's oracles. While the oracles do concern Israel's future, there is nothing in the literary context of Numbers 23–24 that suggests an eschatological-messianic intention. Num 24:14 ("I will advise you what this people will do to your people [i.e. Moab] in the days to come") can hardly be said to serve as a clear and necessary eschatological pointer (contra Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1" 93–95). I suggest that the perception of an eschatological-messianic tone is really the result of commentators viewing Balaam's oracles in the light of what Scripture elsewhere teaches about the eschaton—an interpretive method that, ironically, is more midrashic in nature than grammatical-historical.

[67] E.g. Philo's *De Praemiis et Poenis*, 95; *T. Jud.* 24:1–6; *Tg. Onq.* Num 24:17; *Tg. Neof.* Num 24:17; *y. Taan.* 68d. The *Damascus Document* explains the "star" of Num 24:17 as the Interpreter of the Law, and the "scepter" of the next line as the Prince of the Congregation, i.e. the messianic king (CD 7:18; cf. 1QM 11:6–7). The title Bar Kokhba ("son of the star") was worn by Simon Bar Kosiba, leader of the second Jewish Revolt against Rome, and it implied a messianic claim (see Collins, *Scepter* 63–67, 74–80, 113–14).

[68] The MT of Num 24:7 says that the promised king of Israel will triumph over "Agag," but the LXX and other ancient texts (e.g. Sam Pent, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion) read "Gog," perhaps indicating an eschatological-messianic understanding of the passage (cf. Ezek 38:14–18).

[69] A view suggested, for example, by E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 42.

sponds with the MT rather than the LXX. But my point here is simply that a messianic interpretation of Balaam's references to an Israelite king was well established among ancient Jews, and this included the portion of the third oracle containing a phrase very similar to Hos 11:1 even in the MT: "God brings him out of Egypt" (Num 24:8).

Now an interesting feature of this phrase is the fact that the antecedent of the masculine singular pronominal suffix of the word מוֹצִיאוֹ ("[God] brings *him* [out of Egypt]") is grammatically ambiguous. Whom does God bring out of Egypt?—Israel (i.e. the nation depicted corporately), or Israel's king? The text is open to either reading. A grammatical-historical analysis would indicate that Israel is the intended antecedent, because the "king" of the prophecy would be David, and he did not personally come out of Egypt; the nation did. Furthermore, the entire couplet is virtually identical to a verse in Balaam's second oracle (Num 23:22), the only difference being that there a *plural* pronominal suffix is used ("God brings *them* [מוֹצִיאָם] out of Egypt"), making it clear that the nation is in view.

On a grammatical-historical level, one would have to read the parallel statement in Num 24:8 as another reference to the nation's coming out of Egypt.[70] But if Num 24:8 is treated midrashically so that one rereads the words "God brings him out of Egypt" in light of the Messiah, then the ambiguous antecedent of the pronominal suffix of מוֹצִיאוֹ can be understood as referring to the (messianic) king. An ambiguity like this in an OT verse that allowed for two possible readings, both of which expressed divine truths, was commonly highlighted by ancient midrashic interpreters and both ways of reading the text were regarded as a purposeful part of God's revelation.[71] A Jewish-Christian reader like Matthew—someone who knew Jesus to be the Messiah and knew of his sojourn in Egypt as a child—could not have helped but read Balaam's words midrashically and seen in the phrase "God brings him out of Egypt" a striking applicability to Jesus.[72]

If Matthew read Balaam's words in this way and connected them with the similar statement in Hos 11:1, it becomes all the more understandable how he could read the latter passage within the context of the early life of king Jesus. From a grammatical-historical perspective, Hosea's words spoke

[70] So Harrison, *Numbers* 319; R. Allen, *Numbers* (EBC 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 906–7; T. Ashley, *Numbers* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 493; Cole, *Numbers* 421. J. Sailhamer argues that a grammatical-historical reading of Num 24:8 should treat the singular pronominal suffix as a reference to the king rather than Israel since the (otherwise identical) couplet in Num 23:22 uses a plural suffix to speak of the nation ("Hosea 11:1" 93–95). But throughout Balaam's oracles, singular pronouns and nouns are regularly used to refer to Israel collectively; there is no reason, on a strictly grammatical-historical basis, to think the case is different in Num 24:8.

[71] J. Goldin, *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988) 271–81.

[72] An inquisitive midrashic interpreter would ask if the change (in otherwise identical couplets) from a plural suffix in Num 23:22 to a singular suffix in Num 24:8 had significance. Matthew had a ready answer: God intended Num 24:8 to speak not only of Israel, but also (midrashically) of Jesus the Messiah.

of the infant nation of Israel whom God called out of Egypt to dwell as his royal son in the promised land. But from a midrashic perspective, Hosea's words can also be read messianically, even as Jews commonly read messianically the corresponding passages within Balaam's oracles. In this way, Hosea's statement about the infant nation can be understood quite appropriately as referring also to the nation's future infant king.

VI. CONCLUSION: EXEGETICAL RICHES

It has become increasingly evident in recent years how important it is to understand the Jewish background of the NT if one wants to fully understand NT Christianity.[73] I have tried to show in this article that much of the difficulty modern Bible students have with the NT's use of the OT is, again, the result of a failure to fully appreciate this Jewish background, specifically with regard to the Judaic method of reading the OT. When we see the NT writers repeatedly interpreting the OT in something other than a grammatical-historical manner just as their Jewish contemporaries did—even to the point of giving, at times, a virtually equivalent exegesis of the same OT passages—we must admit that the same hermeneutic method is at work here. To affirm otherwise would be to "kick against the goads." Nor can we sidestep the NT's use of midrashic exegesis by saying that it was only an accommodation to the hermeneutics of Jewish opponents without intending to endorse their methodology.[74] In all three of the cases we have analyzed in this article, the NT writers present their interpretations as inherently valid readings of the OT.

I believe that a failure to understand the theological rationale of midrashic exegesis is what has impeded evangelicals in acknowledging the NT's use of this hermeneutic method. A similar deficiency among liberal biblical scholars has prompted unfair criticism of the NT's use of the OT. For this reason, my purpose here has been to explain the rationale of midrashic interpretation, to defend its legitimacy, and to demonstrate its presence in the NT. Invoking Occam's razor, I affirm that midrashic exegesis and its process of recontextualization provides the easiest and therefore best solution to the problematic way in which the NT interprets Ps 8:4–6, Ps 68:18, and Hos 11:1. In addition, I suggest that many other puzzling cases of NT exegesis of the OT will be clarified if we view them as instances of midrashic exegesis.[75]

[73] See L. Helyer, "The Necessity, Problems, and Promise of Second Temple Judaism for Discussions of New Testament Eschatology," *JETS* 47 (2004) 597–601.

[74] E.g. L. Kuyper, *The Scripture Unbroken* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 2–23.

[75] I suggest that the NT's interpretations of the following OT passages—to list only a few—are best explained as midrashic exegesis: (1) Ps 102:25–27 (quoted in Heb 1:10–12). In the original context, the psalmist spoke of Yahweh's act of creating the world. The writer of Hebrews interprets these words as a reference to the Messiah, the one through whom Yahweh made all things. (2) Ps 40:6–8 (quoted in Heb 10:5–7). In the original context, the psalm spoke of God's desire for voluntary obedience rather than animal offerings *per se*. The writer of Hebrews interprets these words as a reference to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross which supplanted the Mosaic sacrificial

This ancient Jewish hermeneutic subsumes the various proposals that evangelicals traditionally have offered as solutions to problematic cases of NT exegesis. The concepts of generic promise, corporate solidarity, typology, *sensus plenior*, and canonical process reading all find a place within the midrashic framework, for they serve to highlight the ways in which the interconnections of God's revelation may occur, and these interconnections are what permit a midrashic reading.[76] But midrashic hermeneutics readily explains what the other proposals on their own cannot—viz. how the NT can derive non-grammatical-historical meanings from the OT while at the same time explicitly presenting them as actual exegesis. Evangelicals need not fear that acknowledging the presence of midrashic exegesis in the NT will undermine a high view of Scripture, for the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the OT are foundational principles of midrashic hermeneutics. Though a midrashic reading treats the OT text atomistically and does not focus on a passage's grammatical-historical meaning, neither does it reject the grammatical-historical meaning or affirm something contradictory to it.

The data we have examined indicate that the NT writers—like virtually all ancient Jewish interpreters—understood that, in a sense, there could be multiple meanings in the words of the OT, for a statement made in one context might convey another relevant truth when considered within another context that God had revealed. All of this was due to the intention of the omniscient God who gave the OT Scriptures to Israel as a partial unveiling, in the temporal realm, of his eternal plan. The rabbis liked to express the matter

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system. (3) Ps 45:6–10 (quoted in Heb 1:8–9). In the original context, the psalm described an ideal king and his consort on the day of their wedding, with everything cast in an ancient Near Eastern setting. The writer of Hebrews takes the psalm's description of the king and interprets it as God's proclamation to Christ as he reigns on his heavenly throne. (4) Ps 19:4 (quoted in Rom 10:18). In the original context, the psalm described the way that the heavens "declare" the glory of the Creator (i.e. God's general revelation). Paul cites these words as a reference to the spread of the gospel throughout the world. (5) Ps 16:8–11 (quoted in Acts 2:25–28; 13:35–37). In the original context, David thanked God for delivering him from the hand of those who sought to kill him. Peter and Paul explain these words as an eschatological prophecy about the resurrection of the Messiah. (6) Hos 1:10 and 2:23 (quoted in Rom 9:25–26). In the original context, Hosea was talking about apostate Israelites whom God was willing to forgive and reckon again as his people. Paul applies the prophet's words to Gentiles who believe in Jesus. (7) Deut 30:12–14 (quoted in Rom 10:6–10). In the original context, Moses was assuring the Israelites of their ability to keep the Law of Moses. Paul explains these words as a reference to the gospel message of faith in the incarnated, resurrected Christ. In each of the above cases, it seems to me that the OT passage is not given a grammatical-historical interpretation, but its words are reread within a new context in keeping with God's full revelation about Christ. This is midrashic exegesis.

[76] See n. 34 above. Also fitting within a midrashic framework is the recent proposal of Craig Blomberg regarding "double fulfillment" ("Interpreting OT Prophetic Literature" 17–22). Blomberg's contention is that, in many cases, the documentary context of an OT prophecy may imply both a contemporary and an eschatological fulfillment. This may well be true, and in such cases a midrashic reader might situate the words of the prophecy within the eschatological context and read them accordingly. But midrashic hermeneutics does not demand that the eschatological setting for such a reading be indicated in the passage's own documentary context. In none of the cases that I have analyzed in this article do we find the NT's eschatological-messianic reading of an OT passage suggested by the grammatical-historical context of the passage itself.

like this: "The words of Torah are poor in their own context and rich in another context" (*y. Rosh HaSh.* 3:5). This meant that the fuller aspects of God's plan could be perceived only by examining an OT utterance in the light of God's further revelation, so that the connections between those words and other utterances of God might be grasped. Only then could one discern the vast riches of God's word—indeed, the vast riches of God's mind. Furthermore, the "other context" in which an OT statement might be read was often an eschatological context. This was because the Scriptures God gave to Israel were inherently teleological; they adumbrated his eternal purpose and so were always forward-looking. A careful reader of the OT understood that a statement of God in one verse, or a record of his actions or the actions of his people in another verse, was not relevant solely for that one point in time since all of those things pertained to the furtherance of God's plan for the last days (cf. Acts 3:24; Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11; 1 Pet 1:10–12).

Can readers of the Bible employ midrashic exegesis today? I believe that the answer is "yes." In fact, we come close to employing it all the time, whether we realize it or not. Whenever we note a typological connection between an OT event and a NT event, or whenever we see a correlation between one OT verse and another OT verse or NT teaching about Christ, we are highlighting the interconnections of Scripture much like an ancient midrashic interpreter would. The only substantive difference is that we do not categorize what we are doing as "exegesis," and we do not express ourselves in hermeneutic terms. Nevertheless, we are drawing out what we discern to be the plan that was in the mind of God from eternity, and that is essentially what a midrashic interpreter was doing. For us to do the same thing today does not require the divine inspiration that the NT writers possessed (though inspiration obviously guaranteed the accuracy of their midrashic reasoning). Indeed, it would be illogical to accept the gospel teaching of the NT writers as normative for us today without also accepting as normative the hermeneutic approach to the OT that they used in support of that gospel teaching.[77]

Having said this, it is vital for us to understand the following parameters of midrashic exegesis, lest someone think that the NT's authorization of this hermeneutic method opens the door to outlandish interpretations that may undermine biblical teaching: (1) midrashic hermeneutics often sought to read the words of an OT passage in new settings other than the original context—but only other contexts that God had revealed. The borders of legitimate midrashic interpretation extended only as far as the explicit revelation of God

[77] Several evangelicals through the years have argued this point (e.g. S. L. Johnson, Jr., *OT in the New* 93–94; Silva, "NT's Use of the OT" 164; Enns, "Apostolic Hermeneutics" 281–87; McCartney and Enns, "Matthew and Hosea" 99–101). G. Beale also argues this point (*Right Doctrine* 399–404), though he presumes that NT hermeneutics must essentially be grammatical-historical. Other evangelicals have denied that NT hermeneutics is replicable today, but underlying their denial is the assumption that the NT's use of non-grammatical-historical methods must have been an *ad hominem* appeal to contemporary Jewish opponents or an accommodation to the peculiar hermeneutics of first-century culture (e.g. Longenecker, "Who is the Prophet Talking About?" 384–85; Kuyper, *The Scripture Unbroken* 23). As I have argued above, this assumption is invalid.

itself and could never contradict it. This is what gave the method an objective basis.[78] (2) No matter how many levels of meaning might come to be seen in an OT statement, that statement still possessed definite meaning. This meaning—that which was conceived in the mind of God as part of his eternal plan—is what a midrashic interpreter was pursuing. (3) Midrashic exegesis and its process of recontextualization can be applied legitimately only to the books of the OT, not to the books of the NT. The authors of the NT use the midrashic technique to provide the final explanation of God's OT mystery. One would not treat the explanation as if it were also a mystery. This is why Qumran's sectarian literature midrashically exegetes the OT but not other sectarian literature, and why rabbinic midrash compilations expound the OT but not other midrash compilations.[79]

In closing, let me say that, as believers in Jesus, we need to recognize that Christ provides the final measure of God's explicit revelation. He was, and is, the ultimate "context" in which all of the OT is to be read—a fact that most ancient Jews failed to accept (2 Cor 3:14–16). Apart from Christ, the OT is like a jig-saw puzzle that is missing its most important pieces. But when the OT is viewed midrashically, and its statements are considered in light of Jesus and his life, the riches of God's eternal plan stand out in vivid relief.

[78] See M. Pickup, "Eschatological Interpretation in Shirata," in *The Annual of Rabbinic Judaism: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 99; Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination* 21. The problem of someone seeking to go beyond this parameter may be what generated Peter's warning in 2 Pet 1:20–21.

[79] Aaron, *Language and Midrash* 406.